

Introduced by Senator Hueso

February 21, 2014

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 86—Relative to heavy school backpacks.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 86, as introduced, Hueso. Heavy school backpacks.

This measure would acknowledge the health risks that heavy backpacks pose to schoolchildren and recommend certain measures to be taken in that regard to avoid injury.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Overloaded school backpacks are causing an
2 increasing problem of back pain and spinal strain in students in
3 elementary and secondary schools across the nation; and
4 WHEREAS, Because spinal ligaments and muscles are not fully
5 developed until after 16 years of age, overweight backpacks are a
6 source of repeated low-level stress that may result in chronic neck,
7 shoulder, or back pain in children; and
8 WHEREAS, Reviews of data have revealed over 7,000
9 emergency room visits, and over 28,000 doctor's office visits, per
10 year by children for backpack-related injuries; and
11 WHEREAS, Studies of the effects on children of carrying heavy
12 backpacks have shown that heavy loads carried on the back have
13 the potential to compress intervertebral disc height and damage
14 the soft tissues of the shoulder causing microstructural damage to
15 the nerves; and
16 WHEREAS, Students' textbooks are much heavier now than
17 many years ago and, in addition to textbooks, students often carry

1 computers, cell phones, water bottles, running shoes, band
2 instruments, and other equipment considered essential to have
3 readily available; and

4 WHEREAS, More than 90 percent of children carry a school
5 backpack, which studies have found to weigh as much as 25 percent
6 of the child's body weight; and

7 WHEREAS, Backpacks are often not worn correctly and are
8 frequently slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang significantly
9 below the waistline, increasing the weight on the shoulders and
10 causing the child to lean forward when walking or standing to
11 compensate for the weight; and

12 WHEREAS, Rolling backpacks remove the weight from a
13 child's back, but are sometimes not allowed in schools due to a
14 concern over being a trip hazard in the hallways or because of the
15 difficulty of carrying them up and down stairways; now, therefore,
16 be it

17 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
18 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature strongly recommends that
19 all school administrators, teachers, parents, and school children
20 be educated about the potential health impacts of heavy backpacks
21 and take proactive measures to avoid injury; and be it further

22 *Resolved*, That schools should work with parent-teacher
23 organizations to assess the extent to which their students use
24 overweight backpacks and to promote innovative homework
25 strategies that lessen the need for students to take school materials
26 and books from school to home each day; and be it further

27 *Resolved*, That the Legislature urges schools to do the following
28 when developing their guidelines for students' use of backpacks:

29 (a) Discourage students from carrying a backpack that weighs
30 more than 10 percent of a student's body weight.

31 (b) Encourage the use of ergonomic backpacks with
32 individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and
33 equipment.

34 (c) Encourage students to wear both shoulder straps and not
35 sling a backpack over one shoulder.

36 (d) Encourage the use of wide, padded, adjustable backpack
37 straps that fit the student's body.

38 (e) Encourage students to leave the heaviest books at school,
39 and urge teachers to give handouts or workbooks that can be used
40 for homework assignments.

1 (f) Encourage schools to make electronic versions of textbooks
2 available, as federal and state funding for that purpose becomes
3 available.

4 (g) Offer students integrated education about backpacks by
5 using a hanging scale in the classroom to allow students to weigh
6 their backpacks and enter the weight into a graph that would track
7 the weights and use the data to determine whether a student's
8 backpack is too heavy, and provide information about ways to
9 lighten the weight of a backpack; and be it further

10 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
11 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.